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ABSTRACT

Project Great Start is designed to provide non-, limited-, and near-native English proficient students with improved, intensified, and increased learning opportunities for accelerated English acquisition and significant academic achievement. It focuses on three groups: students, parents, and school staff. Students and parents benefit from separate resource centers focused on their needs, and school staff benefit from system-wide professional training workshops and university-sponsored courses. The project is given top marks for curriculum design and language of instruction, professional development, program management, and effectiveness of implementation. Based on the results of several standardized tests, participant observation, student portfolios, student retention, and institutional records, it is concluded that Project Great Start has been and continues to be a very effective program. Eight references and several charts are included. (KFT)

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PROJECT GREAT START

BIENNIAL REPORT

TITLE VII SYSTEM-WIDE GRANT
PR/AWARD #T291R70111-97B

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DECEMBER, 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to provide non/limited/near native English proficient students with improved, intensified and increased learning opportunities for accelerated English acquisition and significant academic achievement, Project GREAT START focuses on three groups: students, parents and school staff.

The student component of the grant revolves around the Newcomers' Interim Service Center (NISC), a specially designed off-site facility in which students in grades 1 - 8 receive instruction in all academic areas for a period of up to four months. A comprehensive assessment program is in place to monitor students' linguistic and academic levels upon entrance to the NISC, along with the later monitoring of student performance when exiting the program and longitudinally in their respective home schools.

Project GREAT START utilizes a Parent Resource Center within the NISC to assist families of culturally diverse students with acclimating to the community and acculturation. Opportunities exist for adults to access community agencies and resources, receive ESL instruction, dialogue with a social worker, and attend various workshops developed and coordinated by the Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

The school staff of District 15 benefits by the many system-wide professional training workshops and university-sponsored courses provided by the project. These include Title VII scholarships for endorsements and university credit at both the undergraduate and graduate level. These course offerings and training opportunities are utilized by paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators across the district.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was utilized to confirm whether or not evidence supported program goals and activities. Each program goal was said to have been achieved or met by *Confirming Evidence*, if and when multiple data measures confirmed same.

KEY PROGRAM FINDINGS

Student Focus: confirming evidence exists to support short-term language acquisition and academic readiness, while some evidence exists to support long-term language acquisition and academic readiness.
Staff Focus: confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.
Parent Focus: confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The program staff of Project GREAT START is to be commended for envisioning and implementing project activities that truly have the potential for lasting and real systemic change for LEP and non-LEP students, staff and parents. The annual and biennial reports provide documentation that substantial progress has been made in achieving the intended program goals and objectives.

Continued efforts are warranted in completing years three through five of the program as originally outlined in the grant proposal.

INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PROJECT GREAT START is a Title VII system-wide improvement program. Its purpose is twofold:

- to provide bilingual or special alternative education programs to children and youth of limited English proficiency, and
- to help such children and youth develop proficiency in English, and to the extent possible, their native language and met the same challenging State content standards expected of all children and youth.

DISTRICT SETTING

Community Consolidated School District 15 is an elementary (K-8) school district serving eight municipalities in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, IL. District 15 serves 12,686 students in 15 elementary schools (K-6), 4 junior high/middle schools (7-8), and one district-wide special education center.

The number of students enrolled in second language programs in the district is 1,820 or over 14% of the total school population. 1,259 students are currently enrolled in the TBE program, with an additional 561 students receiving TPI services.

Over fifty languages are spoken by District 15 students. Major spoken languages/dialects include: Spanish (60%); East Indian (10%); Korean/Japanese (9%); Slavic (13%); and, Chinese (4%).

The percentage of students enrolled in special education programs is 14% overall. 7% of the enrolled TBE/TPI students also receive special education services.

The portion of the total student population of the district that receives free & reduced lunch is 15%. The TBE/TPI portion of students that also receive free & reduced lunch is 9% of the total district population. Diaggregating these numbers by program result in the following: 35% of students enrolled in the district's TBE programs receive free & reduced lunch, while 16% of students enrolled in district TPI programs receive free & reduced lunch.

PROGRAM GOALS

The goal of Project Great Start is to provide non/limited/near native English proficient students with improved, intensified and increased learning opportunities for accelerated English language acquisition and significant academic achievement. The project is organized around the following three major components to meet this goal:

Student Focus

To implement a new educational program to met the wide range of developmental and achievement levels LEP students bring to our schools, to update the existing instructional program to offer challenging content, and to expand learning opportunities beyond the regular school day and year.

Staff Focus
To create a staff of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and pupil support services, adequate in size and ability, competent to educate linguistically and culturally diverse students at al levels of fluency, literacy, academic achievement and acculturation.
Parent Focus
To involve and empower parents and other family members to participate in their child's education and in the larger community.

PRIOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The previous two annual reports list the following accomplishments for Project Great Start:

Student Focus

- Establishment of a Newcomers' Interim Service Center in an off-site facility,
- 321 students enrolled in NISC classes have successfully transitioned into the district's existing TBE/TPI programs,
- Exit conferences were held for each student leaving the NISC program with the staff of the home school to which they transition,
- World Language Clubs are offered at fourteen of the fifteen elementary schools, thus stressing the multicultural and multilingual aspects of instruction to monolingual English students,
- Implementation of an electronic portfolio system for all incoming second language learners,
- All schools in the district continue to implement the "multicultural homeroom" model designed to integrate second language learners with monolingual English students in a deliberate and sustained manner,
- Regular education teachers continue to receive staff development and training in meeting the needs of multicultural and multilingual diverse learners through the planned Title VII grant activities,
- NISC implemented new curricular units in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies for the 1998-99 school year,
- TBE/TPI staff continues their efforts and activities in implementing the ESL Standards for PreK-12 Students,
- After school homework centers continue to operate in 15 of the district's 19 schools,
- A summer program in Native Literacy Skill Building provided tuition-free instruction for ESL students in 1998 and 1999 for students who were reading two or more years below grade level in their native language, and
- The Bilingual Transitions summer program, provided literacy instruction for an additional TBE/TPI students in 1998 and 1999.

Staff Focus

- Staff development workshops provided mentoring and peer coaching opportunities for 19 staff members,
- Project GREAT START awarded 75 scholarships to 34 program assistants, 34 teachers and 7 support personnel during the second year of the grant.

- The formation of a district lab site offering an off-campus, undergraduate cohort program leading to a bachelor's degree in elementary education with an endorsement in bilingual and/or ESL instruction,
- The hiring of a part-time advisor/consultant to facilitate program improvements through June of 2000,
- Staff presentations at state and national conferences,
- Site visits from neighboring school districts,
- Team training of staff at the National Multicultural Institute,
- Participation in Project SMILE linking the NISC with other District 15 schools, and
- 18 district staff members enrolled in this cohort program offered through Northern Illinois University that began in June, 1999.

Parent Focus

- Classes for adult learners continued to be offered in the second year of the grant through collaboration with William Rainey Harper Community College and High Project GREAT START conducted 3 parent workshops during the 1998-99 year,
- 44 parents participated in these programs representing 30% of NISC parents, and
- The Parent Advisory Council successfully conducted 5 formal meetings during the 1998-99 school term.

EVALUATION METHODS

RATIONALE

The evaluation portion of the grant assesses the extent to which each of the program goals has been met and also indicates corresponding merit and worth of the stated goals. Sometimes the evaluation activities were strictly formative in nature, taking place during an implementation phase of the grant project and providing feedback for program improvements. Other evaluation techniques were designed to be summative in nature, occurring at the end of selected period of time and providing commentary about merit and worth of the program (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). Ensuring that evaluation activities address both formative and summative aspects of the program being studied is an actual strength of the design of the project and the evaluation study.

EVALUATION STANDARDS

The American Evaluation Association (AEA), a professional organization dedicated to implementation and advancement of state of the art evaluative techniques in various settings, has created Program Evaluation Standards. These benchmarks for evaluators are used to ensure that evaluation provides accurate, valid and reliable information that meets the needs of the intended stakeholders. It will be the duty of the evaluation team to ensure that these Standards are fully implemented and utilized as appropriate for the purposes of this project. Major themes of the Program

Evaluation Standards include the utility (validity), feasability, propriety, and accuracy (reliability) of the evaluative activities.

MIXED-METHODS EVALUATIONS

A method of data collection used by many researchers to ensure accurate findings is called triangulation. Basically, triangulation requires that multiple data measures (i.e. minimally three distinct measures) be used to produce evidence related to each of the questions studied or addressed in the evaluation plan (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).
This variety and multiplicity of data measures strengthens the validity and reliability of any conjectures ultimately made about progress made toward achieving the program goals. The evaluation plan integrated triangulation with the confirming evidence approach as the base of all evaluation activities.

Latest findings from the research community support a mix of qualitative and quantitative data sources when conducting program evaluation research (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997). A mix of qualitative and quantitative data was collected to assess the impact of the project activities upon attainment of program goals.

CONFIRMING EVIDENCE APPROACH

The evaluation plan utilized a confirming evidence approach to gauge program effectiveness, and provide insight and understanding for continued planning of the partnership activities for the duration of the project. For example, each program goal and research question addressed in the evaluation plan were studied both formatively and summatively, thus providing feedback on current program efforts and also provide recommendations for addressing long-term planning of specific issues and concerns (Patton, 1990).

Each program goal was said to have been achieved or met by *Confirming Evidence*, if and when multiple data measures confirmed same. Program goals and research questions which produced conflicting or differing pieces of data measures were said to have produce *Mixed Evidence*, and were deemed inconclusive. *Disconfirming Evidence* was the term used when multiple data measures verified that program goals have not been successfully met (Rudy, 1999a; 1999b).

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Again, triangulation of all program goals and research questions resulted in multiple data measures. The confirming evidence approach produced documentation verifying one of the following findings for each item of analyses: Confirming Evidence; Mixed Evidence; or, Disconfirming Evidence.

This approach was utilized with all qualitative and quantitative data for it is appropriate and provides the information needed to inform the various stakeholders (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1981). Additionally, if and when quantitative data was analyzed, an appropriate and suitable statistic of choice was also utilized per accepted guidelines published and accepted by the research community.

PERFORMANCE-BASED DATA

Criterion-referenced testing (CRT) has been popular for many years since it allows teachers and school districts to define and articulate a successful level of student performance to indicate mastery or attainment of a given outcome or objective. In the past decade revised forms of CRT's (i.e. performance-based measures) have become accepted standards of practice.

Performance-based assessment often allows students to demonstrate what they know about a particular topic or subject and to show how it can be used or applied. This concept of what we want students "to know and do" is at the heart of standards-based assessment and has been implemented successfully in many local school improvement programs.

DOCUMENTATION & INSTRUMENTATION

Several broad categories of data measures were utilized in data collection and data analyses. Again both qualitative and quantitative measures were utilized to assess the extent to which program efforts successfully addressed the three foci of students, staff and parents described in the major project goal.

The following student performance indicators were selected and deemed appropriate for use in the study by the project staff:

- IPT and other assessments,
- Behavioral and social information,
- Portfolio of student work (artifacts and electronic),
- NISC progress reports, and
- Transition records.

Professional development indicators for both staff development activities and curriculum development processes selected and deemed appropriate by the project staff were:

- Teacher artifacts, and
- Teacher/staff feedback.

Program Planning indicators deemed appropriate and thus utilized by project staff included:

- Parent feedback, and
- Teacher/staff feedback.

APPRORPIATENESS (VALIDITY)

The appropriateness of the selected qualitative and quantitative assessments and their related administration procedures were reviewed for validity. The qualitative measures were determined to be valid if the utility principle was evidenced (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1981). Validity for the quantitative measures was evidenced through face/content documentation provided by the publisher or determined by staff agreement.

In general, the qualitative measures used to gauge project activities were:

- teacher artifacts (e.g. curriculum planning documents; instructional units),
- student artifacts (e.g. samples of student work; electronic portfolios), and
- teacher judgement (e.g. progress reports; transition records), and
- parent feedback (e.g. surveys; focus groups).

The quantitative measures selected and used within the evaluation study included:

- student performance in oral, reading and writing skills as measured by the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT), and
- local assessment measures (CRT's) used in daily instructional planning and curriculum implementation.

ALIGNMENT

The selection of all assessment instruments was jointly completed through review by and subsequent agreement of project staff. All instrumentation was checked for alignment with program goals for the three foci areas (i.e. student, staff and parent), and existing LEP curricula. Alignment of assessment and curricula was critical to in assessing the ultimate project success and goal attainment.

CONSISTENCY (RELIABILITY)

Consistency of assessment results over time was used as the operational definition of reliability. For this study, quantitative measures would be deemed reliable if student performance was consistently measured over time. Since this is only year two of a five year study, more quantitative assessment is needed to determine reliability for locally developed criterion-referenced measures (CRT's) and performance assessments (PA's). The standardized norm-referenced assessments (NRT's) have already proven to be both reliable and valid by the publishers.

Regarding qualitative measures, accuracy of results constitutes reliability as defined by the AEA Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1981). For this study, all qualitative measures were deemed to meet this reliability criterion through staff review and consideration of all assessments utilized in the grant.

FINDINGS: CONTEXT

The Title VII Project Great Start is truly integrated with the second language programs within the district, and within the region.

SHARED PLANNING

For example, the project an integral part of district's strategic plan, entitled *Vision 2005*, and the continuos improvement manual used by all District 15 schools. Schools also must consider the needs of second language learners when creating site-based school improvement plans. In turn, these school improvement plans must be aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards, thus ensuring that the Title VII program is also aligned with state standards.

Project Great Start is also part of the Project SMILE, a distance-learning cooperative with other schools within the district. Partnerships with community groups have

been formed through a wide array of parent/volunteer programs such as: the Police Neighborhood Resource Center (PNRC), the Edgebrook Community Center (a neighborhood resource center), the Northeast Palatine Task Force (a group investigating the needs of changing population demographics), and the Senior Exchange Program.

In this way District 15 staff, teachers, and community members are increased awareness and involved in developing instructional delivery models and curricula for use with second language learners.

JOINT IMPLEMENTATION

Integrated programming (staff development, curricula, instruction) across TBE/TPI programs is achieved through shared staff development inservices and professional training sessions. The district's *1999 Staff Handbook for Second Language Programs* documents the shared efforts to unify services and curricula through a comprehensive, system-wide program of joint planning and implementation across the district schools.

Project Great Start along with all second language programs within the district collaborates with other state and federal programs (e.g. Title I Reading and Mathematics; IDEA special education procedures) to bring the best possible programming to meet the needs of all student learners. The existing TBE/TPI programs has been coordinated with other programming for second language learners such as: the Migrant Education Program, the Emergency Immigrant Education Program, Project ESCALERA (another Title VII regional project). Besides this, coordination between district non-LEP and TBE/TPI programs also exists with Project Success, the district's Educational Foundation, the Urban Education Program, and the Homestretch Homework Centers.

MUTUAL EVALUATION

Currently Title VII, LEP and bilingual staff are engaged in a cross-functional mapping process to align all second language curricula with state standards. This two-year process is being facilitated by internal and external consultants versed in curriculum planning and performance-based assessment. This process will identify key areas of strengths and weaknesses that will be subsequently addressed through the systemic planning efforts of the grant. The process will result in key indicators identified for assessment approaches across curricula along with selected Title VII, LEP and bilingual staff developing selecting, administering, analyzing and summarizing program assessments.

COLLECTIVE MONITORING & FOLLOW-UP

The cross-functional mapping process mentioned above, along with the school improvement planning process ensures that teachers and staff collectively work to evaluate instructional programs and delivery of service models. The mapping process ensures that programs and services will not overlap, and provide mutual benefits for LEP and non-LEP students alike.
Alternative strategies and plans of action when needed

SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The first two annual reports documents the use of parent and staff surveys in developing the Newcomer's Interim Service Center's (NISC) program of instruction, curricula, and parent development components. Year three of the grant also focuses on the parent development component of the NISC with data expected to be reported in the ensuing annual report. Staff routinely provides feedback and direction on staff development training opportunities within the district funded through Title VII monies.

FINDINGS: IMPLEMENTATION

CURRICULUM AND LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Previous annual reports document the appropriateness of curricula and instructional delivery models designed, created and implemented at the Newcomer's Interim Service Center (NISC). Currently the Title VII, LEP and bilingual staff is considering instructional delivery system reform through the cross-functional mapping process. This process will surely impact the student assignment plan noted as a key indicator of the grant proposal.

The curricula of the NISC has continues to be updated, revised and expanded based on the teachers' judgement and feedback of student learner needs. This continuos development process already in place across the district through the school improvement planning process, often results in the nee to expand and/or and create of professional development learning opportunities for staff.

The third-year of the grant will see continued efforts in developing and delivery additional learning opportunities for parents through the Parent Resource Room and the Parent Advisory Council. Project Great Start has also benefited by an increase in services provided by the Project Social Worker, based upon student and family needs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Expanded, coherent and sustained staff development opportunities continue to be a hallmark and legacy of Project Great Start. First year of the grant efforts included mentoring and peer coaching opportunities for interested LEP staff. Year one and tw0o of the grant have both produced cohorts of teachers and staff pursuing coursework leading to degrees, certificates and/or endorsements in second language learning. The project staff has been successful in creating a lab site for student teaching, practicums and internships through the establishment of an on-site cohort program through Northern Illinois University.

All professional development activities are routinely reviewed and evaluated through a formal and informal staff feedback process. New programs are assessed both formatively and summatively to aid in the implementation of staff development programs that are timely, relevant and effective in improving student learning.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Roles that have been defined in the original Great Start proposal have been effectively implemented. These include: Project GREAT START Facilitator/Liaison; NISC classroom teachers; NISC assistants; Project GREAT START Social Worker; and, the Project Secretary. All staff have been deemed qualified before hiring, and a professional growth process within the district ensues continued growth, assessment and remediation if needed. Feedback from staff is informally solicited throughout the school year, and formally requested through focus group interviews and surveys at the close of the school year. No concerns are noted in the area of program management as of the date of this report.

EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The last two annual reports have resulted in no recommendations for improvement or growth. Processes such as staffing, supervision of staff, organization, planning and budgeting have been routinely addressed and implemented by the project staff without concern. Additional information reported in this section of the report substantiates that the program and all related components have been thoughtfully planned and thoroughly implemented per grant specifications.

FINDINGS: OUTCOME

STUDENT OUTCOMES

In order to monitor student progress, the staff of Project GREAT START has implemented a series of assessment practices that provide data and information to support student learning at the NISC and as students transition to their neighborhood schools and into an approved LEP program of instruction.

Some of the data measures currently in place for all students enrolled in programming at the NISC include:

- IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) scores given upon enrollment and exit to the NISC,
- Behavioral/Social, annual anecdotal reports by teachers of student attributes and success in acculturating and matriculating to the NISC and American schooling,
- Progress Reports, quarterly report cards for students enrolled at the NISC encompassing criterion-referenced appraisal of school culture skills, survival English, reading and writing,
- Portfolios of student work from classroom and home assignments across various subject levels,
- Electronic Portfolios a floppy disk/CD ROM version of the above mentioned student portfolio, and
- Transition Record, an informational report for teachers and staff initiated at the transition conference when student exit the NISC program and enter neighborhood schools.

Please note: The above mentioned data measures are mostly performance-based assessments (PA's) of the criterion-referenced variety. They are appropriate (valid) and accurate (reliable) assessments to gauge student growth and learning at the NISC as deemed by staff. Only the IPT scores can be characterized as standardized test measures, yet they too are criterion-based in nature. All of these above assessments have been deemed appropriate for use in assessing student performance based upon the curricula and instructional goals of the NISC outlined in the Project GREAT START grant proposal.

Once students exit the NISC and are placed in an appropriate program of instruction at their neighborhood school, other key assessment procedures measures are used to gauge student performance and learning. These measures are part of the LEP delivery models, or here appropriate the regular education instructional program.

Some of the data measures currently in place for all students previously enrolled in NISC but now receiving services at a neighborhood school include:

- Illinois Measure of Annual Growth (IMAGE) scores, a state developed language proficiency assessment (NRT) in English-language reading and writing skills given each spring in grades 3-8 for students enrolled in an approved TBE/TPI program for less than three years,
- Iowa Test Of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores, a standardized achievement test (NRT) given annually in the spring in grades 2-8 for students enrolled in an approved TBE/TPI program three years or longer,
- Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores, a state developed standardized achievement test (NRT) administered in the spring in grades 3, 5 and 8 in reading, writing and mathematics for students enrolled in an approved TBE/TPI program three years or longer, and
- Illinois Goals Assessment program (IGAP) scores, a state developed standardized achievement test (NRT) administered in the spring in grades 4 & 7 in science and social studies for students enrolled in an approved TBE/TPI program three years or longer (portions of this exam will also assess physical development, health and fine arts beginning in the 1999-00 school year).

Please note: The above mentioned NRT data measures administered in the neighborhood schools differ for students of various grades levels and in the time of the school year in which assessment actually takes place. For these reasons, multi-year data and comparisons to non-LEP students are infrequent at the time of this report. It is hoped that subsequent annual reports and the next biennial evaluation will include reliable and valid aggregate and disaggregate data to accurately gauge student performance, student learning, and ultimately student growth. The Standardized Test Schedule on the following page describes the types of assessment data available for this and future reports.

Standardized Test Schedule

NISC Students	Year 1 1997-98	Year 2 1998-99	Year 3 1999-00	Year 4 2000-01	Year 5 2001-02
Cohort Group 1	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	ITBS (Gr. 2-8); ISAT (Gr. 3, 5 & 8); (IGAP Gr. 4 & 7)	ITBS (Gr. 2-8); ISAT (Gr. 3, 5 & 8); (IGAP Gr. 4 & 7)
Cohort Group 2		IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	ITBS (Gr. 2-8); ISAT (Gr. 3, 5 & 8); (IGAP Gr. 4 & 7)
Cohort Group 3			IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)
Cohort Group 4				IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)	IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)
Cohort Group 5					IMAGE (Gr. 3-8)

REPORTING LINGUISTIC PROFICIENCY

Students linguistic proficiency is assessed at the NISC through both commercially-available proficiency tests (IPT) and locally-developed assessment measures (i.e. teacher judgement and observation noted in progress reports and the transition record, along with judgements made about student work contained in the portfolios).

Baseline comparison of proficiency between "limited" and "non-limited" English proficient students does not occur while students are enrolled in the Newcomer's Interim Service Center, since students are typically enrolled for only nine weeks or less. This is not enough time to make a valid and reliable comparison between NISC students and LEP or non-LEP students enrolled at the NISC in the area of linguistic proficiency. For this reason the NISC staff along with the LEP teachers have agreed to longitudinally measure the linguistic performance of former NISC students in subsequent years of programming while enrolled in other district second language programs. It appears that a critical sampling of students should be available in years three and four of the project, to more thoroughly assess long-term linguistic performance of students served by Project GREAT START. For now, only short-term student performance data is measured through the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) scores given upon enrollment and exit to the NISC.

Please see the following page for additional information and data related to the assessment of short-term linguistic proficiency of NISC students.

REPORTING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Baseline comparison of "standards-based" academic achievement between "limited" and "non-limited" English proficient students will occur in subsequent years of the grant. Measures previously outlined in the STUDENT OUTCOMES section of this report (page 13) will be used to produce a gainscore analyses of NRT student data, and a trend/pattern analyses for performance assessment and CRT data measures.

Currently academic achievement of NISC students is assessed through a variety of performance assessments (PA) along with standardized and locally developed criterion-referenced tests (CRT). This documentation is part of the progress report cycle of the NISC, and the Transition Record completed for students exiting the NISC.

REPORTING STUDENT RETENTION

Baseline comparison of school retention between "limited" and "non-limited" English proficient students is not possible at the time of this report due to incomplete data and software problems found in the management of district data files and reporting procedures. The evaluation team has noted this deficiency and is in process of rectifying this for future evaluative reports and program assessments.

Future biennial reports will be able to report retention data for LEP and non-LEP students in much the same way that free & reduced lunch and special education data comparisons have been reported on page 4 of this report.

Table 1: Oral Proficiency

Change in IPT Levels	# of Students	Percent of Students
None	23	35%
1	25	39%
2	12	19%
3	3	15%
4	1	2%
Totals	64	100%

Table 2: Reading Proficiency

Change in IPT Levels	# of Students	Percent of Students
None	43	96%
1	2	4%
Totals	45	100%

Table 3: Writing Proficiency

Change in IPT Levels	# of Students	Percent of Students
None	8	17%
1	38	83%
Totals	46	100%

The IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) scores found in Tables 1, 2 and 3 of this page are used to gauge short term performance by students in acquiring survival English skills and academic readiness. The tables include student assessment data in the tested areas of Oral Proficiency. Reading Proficiency and Writing Proficiency. The data is analyzed in a gainscore manner utilizing pre- and posttest measures upon enrollment and exit to the program.

This sample is the most recent student performance data related to linguistic proficiency not previously reported in the prior two annual reports. The student aggregate data is comprised of students of various grade levels. This student data is also impacted differing length of service that students received while enrolled at the NISC.

The data indicates that improvement has been made in students' oral proficiency level though the improvement differs among students enrolled at the center. This is a positive indicator of student success in survival English, and can also be corroborated by student progress reports and portfolios of student work. The writing proficiency data also indicates significant improvement over a short period of intervention. The data in Table 2 reflects the type of growth in reading as measured by the IPT expected for the period of time students were enrolled at the NISC. Additional data utilizing criterion-referenced test measures and performance-assessments will be utilized to gauge long-term student performance. in reading.

REPORTING MULTI-YEAR PROGRESS

Multi-year progress of "limited" and "non-limited" English proficient students' academic achievement, linguistic proficiency, and school retention is to be completed in years three through five of the grant. The nature of the Newcomer's Interim Service Center does not provide the opportunity to gauge students' long-term skill acquisition in survival English or academic achievement. Other test measures that occur later in a student's career are more apt to gauge the long-term success of NISC students as they progress in schools.

Gainscore analyses of aggregate NRT data and trend/pattern analyses of performance assessment and CRT data will appropriately asses the long-term achievement and survival English skills of former NISC students. See page 14 of this report for the schedule of standardized assessments that is in place for reporting multi-year progress.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Progress made in achieving all objectives has been reviewed and addressed in two previous annual reports (FY98 & FY99) along with additional documentation provided in this biennial report (pp. 4-6 *Prior Accomplishments;* pp. 9-11 *Context;* and, pp. 12-16 *Outcome*). The program objectives are categorized in the following manner:

Students Focus
(Objectives A1a - A5c)

- Newcomer's Interim Service Center
- Instructional delivery System Reform
- Student assignment Plan reform
- Curriculum Update
- Expansion and Creation of Learning Opportunities

Staff Focus
(Objectives B1a - B3b)

- Coursework leading to degrees and certificates/Endorsements
- Staff Development Opportunities
- Creation of a Lab Site

Parent Focus
(Objectives C1a - C4d)

- Adult Continuous learning
- Parent resource Room
- Parent Advisory Council
- Project Director and Social Worker

Based upon the review of the evidence presented the following can be said about the long-term attainment of program objectives characterized as Student Focus:

- confirming evidence exists to support short-term language acquisition and academic readiness, while
- mixed evidence exists to support long-term language acquisition and academic readiness.

Based upon the review of the evidence presented the following can be said about the long-term attainment of program objectives characterized as Staff Focus:

- confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.

Based upon the review of the evidence presented the following can be said about the long-term attainment of program objectives characterized as Parent Focus:

- confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness of all program components have been verified and confirmed. The program goals and objectives of the three foci areas of *Student, Staff* and *Parents* have all been addressed and have resulted in varying degrees of programmatic success. No glaring concerns or issues have been noted for either of the three foci areas.

Implementation concerns and issues have been noted and addressed in this and previous reports regarding the need for long-term student assessment data to gauge the relative effectiveness and impact of the NCISC upon student learning. It is the belief of the evaluation team that steps are in place to provide the aggregate data necessary to make comparisons among and between groups of students in future evaluative reports.

Please see the section on *Claim Statements* below and the*Claim Statements* charts on pp. 19 & 20 for additional information.

RESULTING CLAIM STATEMENTS

The overall program accomplishments have been characterized and addressed in ten claim statements found on pp. 19 & 20 of this report. Four statements or claims are made about meeting student goals and objectives (Claim Statements 1-4); two claim statements are made regarding professional development opportunities for staff (Claim Statements 5 & 6); two statements are made about instructional reform issues (Claim Statements 7 & 8); and two statements or conclusions are made about the parental focus of the grant (Claim Statements 9 & 10).

Each of the ten claim statements are characterized as either being verified by confirming, mixed or disconfirming evidence. The evaluative approach used to reach these conclusions has been described more thoroughly in previous portions of this grant (see *Confirming Evidence* pg. 6)

Claim Statements Chart : Student & Staff Focus

Claim	LEP Students participating in Project Great Start will:	Confirming Evidence	Mixed Evidence	Disconfirming Evidence
1	demonstrate short term language acquisition skills related to survival English	√		
2	demonstrate long term language acquisition skills related to survival English		√	
3	demonstrate short term academic readiness	√		
4	demonstrate long term academic achievement		√	

Claim	LEP teachers who participate in the Project Great Start project will:	Confirming Evidence	Mixed Evidence	Disconfirming Evidence
5	demonstrate improved ability to facilitate student acquisition of language and academic readiness through participation in short term staff development activities that include workshops and mini-courses	√		
6	demonstrate improved ability to facilitate student acquisition of language and academic readiness through participation in long term activities that include college coursework, degrees, and mentoring and peer coaching	√		

Claim Statements Chart (contd.): Program Reform & Parent Focus

Claim	The Project Great Start Instructional Program Reform will:	Confirming Evidence	Mixed Evidence	Disconfirming Evidence
7	demonstrate short term improvement in student language acquisition and academic achievement	√		
8	demonstrate long term improvement in student language acquisition and academic achievement	√		
9	demonstrate short term participation by families and the community in helping LEP students achieve academic success and language acquisition	√		
10	demonstrate long term participation by families and the community in helping LEP students achieve academic success and language acquisition	√		

EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVES

Progress made in achieving all program objectives has been summarized and addressed on pp. 17 -18 of this report in the section entitled,*Program Objectives.* The evaluative team is more than satisfied with the overall efforts made toward accomplishing each of the program objectives for the three areas of focus: Students (Objectives A1a - A5c), Staff (Objectives B1a - B3b), and Parents (Objectives C1a - C4d).

EVIDENCE OF GOAL ATTAINMENT

The ten claim statements detailed on pp. 18 & 19 of this report directly align with the program goals and objectives originally written for this grant. The statements reflect the three areas addressed by the grant activities (i.e. students, staff and parents) thus emphasizing the systemic nature of Project GREAT START. The Summary Chart found on the following page addresses each of the three areas of focus and denotes and clarifies whether or not evidence exists to support goal attainment based upon

Summary Chart

Project Goal	Confirming Evidence	Mixed Evidence	Disconfirming Evidence
Student Focus To implement a new educational program to met the wide range of developmental and achievement levels LEP students bring to our schools, to update the existing instructional program to offer challenging content, and to expand learning opportunities beyond the Regular school day and year.	√		
Staff Focus To create a staff of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and pupil support services, adequate in size and ability, competent to educate linguistically and culturally diverse students at al levels of fluency, literacy, academic achievement and acculturation.	√		
Parent Focus To involve and empower parents and other family members to participate in their child's education and in the larger community.	√		

grant activities. Confirming evidence exists for each of the three foci areas (student, staff and parents) to conclude that positive attainment and completion of the stated project goals and activities has been achieved.

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

Based upon the review of the evidence presented the following *claim statements* can be made regarding the project:

Student Focus
- confirming evidence exists to support short-term language acquisition and academic readiness, while
- mixed evidence exists to support long-term language acquisition and academic readiness.

Staff Focus
- confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.

Parent Focus
- confirming evidence exists to support all program objectives.

UNANTICIPATED FINDINGS

The documentation presented as part of the biennial review process also showed evidence of two positive findings not intended or outlined in the original grant proposal for project GREAT START.

First, on-going summer curriculum work has been initiated by the district staff to align the total LEP curricula with Illinois Standards for Learning. This ambitious and comprehensive project should be noted as both visionary and potentially instrumental in ensuring that LEP students are well-prepared in meeting state standards for learning.

Secondly, the NISC has been cited by independent reviewers from outside of the district as a distinctive and impactful program of learning. The reviewers noted that the instructional programming offered by the NISC was highly significant in the district subsequently achieving Lincoln Award status, from the State of Illinois.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The program staff of Project GREAT START is to be commended for envisioning and implementing project activities that truly have the potential for lasting and real systemic change within the LEP and non-LEP students, staff and parents. The annual and biennial reports provide documentation that substantial progress has been made in achieving the relative program goals and objectives.

Continued efforts are warranted in completing years three through five of the program as originally outlined in the grant proposal.

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